

## **Putting the Purple Line Where It Belongs**

**By Council President Blair G. Ewing**

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Expanding transportation options for Montgomery families is a top priority for the Montgomery County Council. Our balanced program of road improvements, interchange and intersection upgrades, and transit enhancements is geared to giving County commuters more choices, while preserving our neighborhoods, our quality of life, and our open space.

Projects in the works include Norbeck Road Extended, which ultimately will give us four east-west lanes from Rockville to I-95 and cuts in Ride-On bus fares – along with more transit incentives for local employers and free bus service into some of our most congested areas.

But all of this is not enough. We need to do more. We need, among other things, a Purple Line Metro line that will connect the two branches of the Red Line, starting at the Bethesda Metro station and moving through Connecticut Avenue, the Silver Spring Metro station, Langley Park, the University of Maryland, and ending at the New Carrollton Metro station. That's the inner alignment – and it's far superior to a proposed outer alignment that would loop from Rock Spring Park through Grosvenor, Wheaton, and White Oak to end at New Carrollton.

And we need to settle now on an alignment. Our unified recommendation to the state is critical to gaining our fair share of federal transportation monies when the next federal authorization is made in 2003.

Here are my "Ten Best Reasons" why we need to move forward with an inner Purple Line.

1. The inner line is "Smart Growth," the outer line isn't. The inner would serve mostly older, densely populated communities where most folks would walk or ride the bus to board. The outer would require the construction of thousands of parking spaces in lots and garages along the route.
2. An inner line is more than three times cheaper than an outer line -- \$1.2 billion for the inner versus \$4 billion for the outer – a cost per-mile of \$202 million for the outer line as opposed to \$85 million for the inner. The outer line would cost \$52.30 per new rider as opposed to \$29.38 per new rider for the inner line.
3. The inner line is already included in the Silver Spring and Bethesda Master Plans and the possibility of it is acknowledged in the East Silver Spring and Takoma Park Master Plans. Most of the outer line is not in the Master Plan at all.
4. Because of the huge cost and low cost-effectiveness of the outer line, it is extremely likely that the federal government would not approve funds to build it. A vote for the outer line is very likely a vote for doing nothing. The inner line is more consistent with the type of rail projects the federal government is currently considering for funding.
5. An inner line links jobs in Bethesda and the 355 and I-270 corridors to Silver Spring and Langley Park, where many employees or potential employees live.
6. The inner line would serve our immigrant and minority populations well and has received strong support in the Latino community. It would help to revitalize Langley Park.
7. Public support, as measured by comments received by the Council at our October 2 public forum, strongly supports the inner line. There is little or no grassroots support for the outer line.
8. The inner line would contribute to our ongoing redevelopment of Silver Spring, in which we have invested millions of public dollars and would link Silver Spring with Bethesda.
9. The inner line would offer direct access to the University of Maryland in College Park for County students, whether they are adults or fresh out of high school.
10. The inner line will be the alignment most likely supported by the state of Maryland, as well as the County's Transportation Policy Report. It also has the endorsement of the Planning Board. We all need to be on the same page if we are going to capture federal transportation monies.

On the merits, we need an Inner Purple Line. There's no doubt the Outer Line would serve some needs, but we have to make choices. Once you look at the facts, it's an easy choice.